

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5769  
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E. O. 11652:NA  
TAGS: PGOV PBOR UK EI  
SUBJECT: GALLUP POLL ASSESSES NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION  
PART II

REF: LONDON 6783

1. EMBASSY HAS NOW RECEIVED RESULTS OF GALLUP POLL  
ON NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION CONDUCTED IN BRITAIN  
BETWEEN MARCH 22-28, 1978. PREDICTABLY, RESULTS SHOW  
GREATER FAITH THAT BORDER WILL REMAIN, AND THAT HMG  
HAS RESPONSIBILITY TO STAY INVOLVED AND ENSURE OUTCOME  
THAT MEETS WISHES OF PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND.  
FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES RESPONSES ON QUESTIONS IN SAME  
ORDER AS PRESENTED REFTEL, THOUGH SEVERAL SUBJECTS

(E.G. PROVISIONAL IRA) WERE OMITTED BY INTERVIEWERS IN  
BRITAIN.

(A) PARTITION. ABOUT HALF (49 PERCENT) IN  
BRITAIN BELIEVED THE BORDER BETWEEN NORTHERN IRELAND  
AND THE REPUBLIC WOULD REMAIN. ROUGHLY THREE-FOURTHS  
OF THE 28 PERCENT WHO THOUGHT IT WOULD EVENTUALLY  
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DISAPPEAR INDICATED IT WOULD TAKE SIX YEARS OR LONGER  
FOR THIS TO OCCUR.

(B) BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. WHILE 30 PERCENT OF  
THE RESPONDENTS OPPOSED ANY BRITISH DECLARATION OF  
INTENT TO WITHDRAW FROM NORTHERN IRELAND (AND 17  
PERCENT DIDN'T KNOW), 53 PERCENT THOUGHT SUCH A STATE-  
MENT WOULD BE HELPFUL. 27 PERCENT (OF THE TOTAL)

THOUGHT THE STATEMENT SHOULD NOT MENTION A SPECIFIC DATE; 26 PERCENT THOUGHT IT SHOULD.

(C) AS IN THE IRISH POLL, RESPONDENTS WERE THEN ASKED TO ESTIMATE SHORT AND LONG RUN OUTCOMES IN THE EVENT WITHDRAWAL TOOK PLACE PURSUANT TO SUCH A STATEMENT WITHOUT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT HAVING BEEN REACHED. IN THE SHORT RUN, A PLURALITY (34 PERCENT) THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE A BREAKDOWN OF GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL CHAOS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. 21 PERCENT DIDN'T KNOW, 16 PERCENT FORESAW CIVIL WAR INVOLVING THE WHOLE OF IRELAND, AND 12 PERCENT FORESAW AN INDEPENDENT NORTHERN IRELAND WITH POWERSHARING BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS. IN THE LONGER RUN (OVER TWO YEARS); THE LARGEST CATEGORY (30 PERCENT) HAD NO OPINION, WHILE OTHER ANSWERS RANGED INCONCLUSIVELY AMONG (1) A UNITED IRELAND NEGOTIATED BY NORTH AND SOUTH (17 PERCENT), (2) AN INDEPENDENT NI WITH CATHOLIC/PROTESTANT POWER-SHARING (17 PERCENT); (3) CIVIL WAR (13 PERCENT); (4) BREAKDOWN OF GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL CHAOS (12 PERCENT); (5) A UNITED IRELAND ENFORCED BY THE IRISH ARMY (11 PERCENT); AND (6) AN INDEPENDENT, LOYALIST NI (8 PERCENT).

(D) SELF-DETERMINATION. THE BRITISH RESPONDENTS AGREED (78 PERCENT) THAT THE PEOPLE OF NI SHOULD BE ABLE TO DECIDE THE UNIFICATION QUESTION THEMSELVES BY REFERENDUM. ON THIS, BRITISH AND IRISH (REFTEL) LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGREE.

(E) GALLUP DETERMINED THAT 46 PERCENT OF THE BRITISH RESPONDENTS BELIEVE WESTMINSTER'S ECONOMIC SUBSIDIES CONSTITUTE THE TIE THAT BINDS NI TO THE UK. PATRIOTIC OR HISTORIC REASONS WERE CITED BY 22 PERCENT AND RELIGIOUS REASONS BY 21 PERCENT. HOWEVER, 68 PERCENT OPPOSED CONTINUED BRITISH SUBSIDIES IN A PERIOD AFTER REUNIFICATION.

2. COMMENT: MOST OF THE RESULTS ON THE BRITISH SIDE ARE CONSISTENT WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE RANGE OF BRITISH ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS. SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS MIGHT RAISE AN EYEBROW, HOWEVER, AT THE SUPPORT EXPRESSED BY A BARE MAJORITY FOR AN HMG STATEMENT ON EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL, AN OPTION HMG HAS CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO EXERCISE. NEVERTHELESS, THE RESULTS OF THE POLL ARE GENERALLY INCONCLUSIVE, AND WILL SUGGEST NO CLEAR-CUT PUBLIC PREFERENCES ON THE ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO POLICY MAKERS. THUS IF THE POLL RESULTS HAVE ANY IMPACT ON HMG AT ALL, WHICH IS DOUBTFUL, IT WILL BE TO REINFORCE THE GOVERNMENT'S TENDENCY TO CONCLUDE THAT NO MAJOR INITIATIVES ON NORTHERN IRELAND

ARE POLITICALLY WISE IN THE RUN UP TO THE BRITISH GENERAL ELECTIONS, WHENEVER THEY MAY BE. BREWSTER

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